



## CONCEPT OF BALA SAMSKARA – SCIENTIFIC VIEW

Dr. Meenakshi

Assistant Professor, Department of Kaumarabhritya / Balaroga, Ashwini Ayurvedic Medical College, Tumkur, India.

### ABSTRACT

India is a country with a rich and varied cultural heritage where Hindu Dharma is held in high esteem. Hindu dharma is not a religion but a way of life, which has been refined over millennia to help individuals lead successful lives. The unique relationship between Samskara (sacraments) and culture shapes one's lifetime by defining moments or goals that nourish, purify and grant dignity and decorum. The goal of samskara is to improve the culture as a whole. The samskaras are performed for the physical, social and religious development of the individual. Ancient Hindu mythology described sixteen Samskara for a person. This article will describe in detail eight samskara for growth and development of children, along with their medical relevance: Jatakarma (birth rituals), Namkaran (naming the child), Nishakraman (first outing), Annaprashan (first feeding), Chudakarna (head shaving), Karnachedan (piercing the earlobes), Upanayana (thread ceremony) and Vedarambha (start of formal education).

A Samskara is a rite of passage, and virtually every world culture has such ceremonies. Rites of passage are ceremonies that mark important events in the life of an individual. Samskara also build a wakefulness of the attainment of social status and rights for the individual. Physician can also assess the proper growth and development of the child while performing the Samskaras. The number of Samskara varies in different Hindu Dharma Granthas (text books), it is about 16-40, but the applicable Samskara are 16 in number which spreads from Garbhadana to Antyesthi Samskara. Among these 16, only 11 will fall under the period up to childhood. Ayurveda also describes different Samskaras in the different period of life to mark, or to announce attainment of different milestones thus ensuring proper growth and also to differentiate them from the child with developmental delay.

**KEYWORDS:** Jatakarma, Nishkraman Samskara; Growth and Development; Developmental Delay.

### INTRODUCTION:

Samskaras are those religious rites and ceremonies which sanctify the body, mind and intellect, so that person becomes fit for the society. In Ayurveda, the word Samskara is introduced as "SamskaraohiGunaantradyanam" which means qualitative improvement carried out by incorporating the specific qualities (transforming of the qualities).

- 1] Physician can also assess the proper growth and development of the child while performing these Samskaras. The Upanishads mention Samskaras as a means to grow and prosper in all four aspects of human pursuit - Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Karma and Kama (work and pleasure), and Moksha (salvation).
- 2] Samskaras are the turning points of life and need to be celebrated. Samskaras are great, time-tested tools in our traditional systems which help carve out a great personality. Apart from scriptural validation, history also proves to us the great effectiveness of these methods.
- 3] The primary purpose of Samskaras is to attain spirituality and help realize moksha or the ultimate union with the divine. It is very clear that merely performing these sacraments will not lead to moksha. However not performing these Samskaras may make it impossible to attain moksha. At a secondary level the Samskaras are cultural events that provide occasions for family and friends to get together and bond. And it is this bonding that forms the basis for a peaceful life. At yet another level they provide an identity to the individual and link him to the society in which he or she lives. They enable the individual to understand the gravity of the various life stages and therefore live a more responsible life.
- 4] Number of Samskaras The number of Samskara varies in different Hindu Dharma Granthas, it is about 16-40. In Grihya sutra there is mentioning of 18-21 Samskaras. While in Manusmriti, 13 of them and in Gautama Grihya Sutra, 40 of them are explained. While the 16 Samskaras explained by MaharshiDayananda are widely accepted and taken into consideration by Ayurveda Acharyas. These 16 Samskaras are often referred to as the Shodasa Samskaras.
- 5] They are:-
  1. Garbhadana (Sacrament of Impregnation or Conception)
  2. Pumsavana (Engendering a male issue)
  3. Simantonayana (Hair-parting)
  4. Jatakarma (Birth ritual)
  5. Namakarana (Naming ceremony)

6. Nishkrama (First outing or outing ceremony)
7. Annaprashana (feeding ceremony)
8. Chudakarma or Mundan (Shaving of head)
9. Karnavedhana (Piercing the earlobes)
10. Upanayana (Sacred thread initiation)
11. Vedarambha (Beginning of vedic study)
12. Samavartana (End of studentship)
13. Vivaha (Marriage Ceremony)
14. Vanprastha (Renouncing the house holder's life)
15. Sanyasa (Leading the life of a monk)
16. Antyesthi (Death cremation)

### CLASSIFICATION OF SAMSKARA:

- 1) The samskara can be categorising given above which range from conception (pre-birth) to funeral (post-death) ceremonies as:-
  - a) Garbhastha (pre-natal) Samskaras-Garbhadan, Pumsavana, Simantonayana.
  - b) Balyawathantargata (childhood) samskaras: Jatakarma, Namkarana, Nishakramna, Annaprashana, Chudakarma, Karnavedhan.
  - c) Adhyayanartha (educational) Samskara: Vidyarambha, Upanayana, Vedarambha
  - d) Grahashtartha (Marriage) Samskara: Vivaha
- 2) The samskara in Balyaawastha may be classified follows:
  - A. Ksheerap kala:
    - a. During Neonatal Period Jatakarma, Namkarana
    - b. During Infantile Period: Nishakramana, Annaprashan, Karnavedhan
  - B. Ksheerannad/Annad kala:
    - a. During Toddler Period Chudkarana Samskara
    - b. During Preschool and School Age Upnayana Samskara, Vedarambha Samskara

### Concept of Bala-Samsakara:

1. **Jatkarma Samskara: (Ceremony performed after birth or birth rituals)**  
Jatkarma is the birth ceremony which helps the baby transcend from

intrauterine life to extra uterine life. It should be done for clearing the mouth secretions which clears airway and prevents aspiration. Placing cotton soaked in ghee on head maintains temperature of the baby which prevents heat loss from baby's head, which has the largest surface area, thus preventing hypothermia. Only after the baby is stabilised umbilical cord was cut, emphasizing on resuscitative measures. Tying the cord to baby's neck by thread prevents bleeding from cord and minimizes chances of infection. Swarnaprashan a type of Lehan given to baby by Suvarna Bhasma, honey and ghee serves - the purpose of both nutrition and immunization. This Lehana (licking of medicine preparations) also gives an opportunity to physician to assess the rooting and sucking reflex of neonate. Honey and ghee have a rich caloric value, provide energy to baby whose previous source of nutrition from placenta has stopped. This first feed initiates gastrointestinal movements and activates the gut. Swarna Bhasma gives physical protection to baby, enhances brain development and is in micro particles easily absorbable by baby's intestine. Use of Mantra in Jata Karma gives psychological support to parents especially mother. Breast feeding is to be given on the first day so to ensure proper nutrition and protective immunoglobulin present in colostrum. Early initiation of breast feed also stimulates prolactin reflex. When the baby sucks, the nerve ending in the nipple carry message to the anterior pituitary which in turn release prolactin and that acts on the alveolar glands in the breast to stimulate milk secretion. The water filled earthen jar may serve cooling purpose or maintenance of humidity in baby's ward room.

## 2. Namakaran Samskara: (Naming ceremony of baby)

Name of baby has a significant role in his/her identity. Generally appropriate time for naming ceremony in 10th after birth of child. This is the time when child has successfully passed the susceptible early neonatal period (birth to seven days) which bears maximum chances of getting risk of infections, neonatal jaundice, sepsis, etc. As new born health is indeed the key to child health and survival, Namakaran Samskara has a significant place. As the name is given by parents, it helps develop a parental bonding with baby and understanding of parental responsibilities. With all appropriate arrangements on the day of naming ceremony, bathing of mother and baby with medicated water also ensures hygiene and disinfection. Lodhra used has Shothnashaka (reduced inflammation) and Vranaropaka (wound healing) properties and is categorized under Artava Sangrahaniya (controls excessive vaginal bleeding).

## 3. Nishkrama Samskara:

In this ceremony, baby is taken out of Kumaragara or home first time. This empowers the baby to adapt with external environment. It is performed by father and mother at fourth month according to Vagbhata and Kashyapa. During this child is first time taken outside home preferably to a temple with Shankha Nada and chanting of Vedic mantras. The baby should be given bath, wearing clean clothes, ornamented, possessing mustard, honey and Ghrita or Gorochana, along with Dhatri (wet nurse) should be taken out of the house. Thereafter worshipping the Agni (burning fire) with Ghrita and Akshata should be done. There after worshipping the Brahmana, God Vishnu, Skanda and other family gods with Gandha (fragrances), Pushpa (flowers), Dhupa (fumigations), Mala (garlands) etc. Then performing prayer with Brahmanas and taking their blessings and saluting the Guru, and then re-enter own house; the physician should narrate the mantra for offering prayer for baby.

## 4. Simantonayana (Hair-parting):

In this Samskar, the husband parts the wife's hair; it is performed in fourth to eight months of pregnancy. In Ayurvedic texts during period of pregnancy, Acharyas advised month wise various dietetic regimen and mode of conducts for pregnant woman which results in normal development of foetus who has good health, strength, voice, compactness etc. Acharya also advised that if mother not follow proper advised lifestyle then it may result in Doshas vitiation which produce abnormalities of foetus (Garbhanga-Vikriti), affecting its appearance, complexion and Indriyas (sense organ).

## 5. Annaprashana Samskara:

Generally, paediatricians recommend breast feeding upto six months and supplementary food can be started after six months. Similar theory also described by our Acharya. The food is properly mashed, should be liquid form to avoid difficulty in deglutition. Cleaning by Jal Achamana (water) indicates the highly developed sense of oral hygiene. Starting the intake of fruits offers energy as well as vital vitamins and minerals to baby. This ceremony can also be useful for assessment of developmental milestones like rolling over, Sitting with own support in tripod fashion, stranger anxiety and monosyllabic speech at sixth month. Teeth eruption in children also begins around this age. Due to all this proper dentition is also need for care. Similarly, Annaprashan at tenth month offers assessment of bisyllabic speech, telling a word like bye-bye, immature pincer grasp and standing with support.

## 6. Karnavedhan earlobes:

Samskara (Piercing the There are different views about performing this ceremony in Ayurvedic texts: A. According to Sushruta in 6th or 7th month B.

According to Vagbhata in 6th 7th, 8th month Nov-Dec 2020 abnormalities like wide sutures, microcephaly, macrocephaly, elevated or depressed fontanelle etc. Palpation of scalp carefully may also reveal cranial defects or craniotabes. During scalp examination, inspect any cutaneous abnormalities such as cutis aplasia or abnormal hair whorls as they may suggest an underlying genetic disorder and it also offers protection of the child. C. There is a chapter named "Chudakarniye" in Kashyapa Samhita (Kashyapa Samhita Sutrasthana 21, but there is no direct reference available about performing this ceremony because chapter is incomplete from beginning. According to Sushruta, in propitious Tithi (date), Muhurta and Naksatra, after reciting auspicious hymns, the child should be placed in the lap of wetnurse or male attendant engaging and consoling him with toys; then the physician pulling the ear with his left hand should pierce the ears in the middle of the Karnapeetha where the skin is thinner (DaivakritaChidra) with his right hand slowly and evenly by needle or any tool in case of thin and thick lobes respectively. In male child first the right ear should be pierced but in female child, left ear should be pierced first and then the Pichuvarti should be placed at that place, usually performed on auspicious day in winter season.

## Importance of Karnavedhan Samskara:

According to Sushruta the child's ears are pierced for the purpose of Rakshanimit (protection from various diseases) and Bhushan-nimit (ornamentation).

## 7. Chudakarma Samskara:

This Samskara involves shaving of the head, preferably if child is son and performed when sun is in Uttarayana. This is ceremony is done within 1 year or can be done till child gain 3 years. This Samskara is performed in order to attain longevity, strength and radiance. This Samskara involves first shaving of the child's hair. The shaving blade should be harmless. According to Sushruta, the cutting of hairs, nail gives lightness, prosperity, courage and happiness. The Samskara offers a chance for examination of the skull and stimulate the hairgrowth. Detection of abnormalities like wide sutures, microcephaly, macrocephaly, elevated or depressed fontanelle etc. Palpation of scalp carefully may also reveal cranial defects or craniotabes. During scalp examination, inspect any cutaneous abnormalities such as cutis aplasia or abnormal hair whorls as they may suggest an underlying genetic disorder and it also offers protection of the child.

## 8. Vedarambha Samskara:

The Samskara is variously named; it is called Vidyarambha, Akshararambha, Aksharasvikarana and Akshara Lekhana by different writers. As the child acquires capacity, strength to learn and education should be started. Usually performed at 6th year. This Samskara correlates with school age (6-12 years age). On the tongue of the child the letters "Hari Sri Ganapataye Namah Avignamastu" and all the alphabets are written with a piece of gold. The child is made to write the same letters from "Hari Sri" onwards with its index finger on raw rice in a bell metal vessel and the child is made to utter each word when it is written. Either the father of the child or an eminent teacher officiates at this ritual. In this Samskara, each student, according to his lineage, masters his own branch of the Vedas. It signifies the student's commitment to learning and the teacher's to teaching, and involves a Homa and many prayers. Starting formal education at five years is apt in today's era also, as by this time a normal child learns to walk, run, climb stairs, tell his name and gender, play cooperatively in a group, copy simple diagrams, use pencil, say song, poem, feed by himself and can go to toilet alone. Thus, a child of this age can adjust well if sent to Gurukul (formal school). It is also time for assessment of mental growth of child.

## 9. Upanayana Samskara:

This Samskara signifies spiritual rebirth that's why after the Upanayana Samskar is performed, the young become a Dvija i.e. Twice born. The brain growth of the child gets completed up to the age of 5 years. A thread tied around the waist may serve the purpose of assessment of the physical growth and to rule out the malnutrition. This Thread around waist also serves the purpose to ascertain the physical growth. Assessment of maturity of brain to perform intellectual activities during school going age is done. It is also done to initiate sense of responsibility as well as spiritual well-being of the child. The child who has gain the capacity to learn should be initiated to the study of interest with the guidance under Guru.

## DISCUSSION:

Various Samskaras can be understood as the significant cultural events in an individual's life from birth to death. These methods or rituals possessing socio-cultural as well as some scientific rational behind it. Samskaras provide sound mental and physical health and the confidence to face life's challenges. It signifies Growth and development and the ceremonial announcement of milestones achieved providing with periodical screening. Samskaras can energize the body and revitalizes it and this help to increase physical strength and resilience to work for longer period of time. Samskara described in Ayurvedic texts are based on the various stages of child growth and developments and hence provide a rational guideline toward his care during celebrating different ceremonies from very conception to childhood. Garbha-Samskara means imbedding good values (Samskara) in the foetus. It prevents complications during pregnancy hyperten-

sion, like post-partum pregnancy induced haemorrhage. All procedure of GarbhaSamskara helps in every stage for the all-around development of a healthy, beautiful, social and smart progeny with longevity. It plays the prime root role in mother and child health care system of our nation. Ayurveda also describes different Samskaras in the different period of life to mark, or to announce attainment of different milestones thus ensuring proper growth and also to differentiate them from the child with developmental delay. Introducing the newer faculties like Upaveshana or the protective measures like Kamavedhana in the form of Samskara to bring about refinement in the growth activity of the child. Each Samskara make the child to acquire a new talent and is called as Gunantaradhanam.

#### CONCLUSION:

Samskara are rites performed with an objective of imparting positive potentials in a person. The childhood Samskara aim at preparing the baby for extra uterine life successfully, develop proper feeding habits, ensure adequate nutrition, prevent diseases, adapt to environment for further survival, give individual identity and educate the child. It takes care of not only physical health but also prevents various psychosocial discrepancies, imparts higher sanctity to life, thus making him a responsible youth of good character who proves to be an asset to the society. Samskara described in Ayurvedic texts are based on the various stages of child growth and developments and hence provide a rational guideline toward his care during celebrating different ceremonies from very conception to childhood.

#### REFERENCES:

- I. Devendernath Mishra, Kaumarbhritya, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratisthana, Delhi, second edition 2008.
- II. Sacraments-Samskaras. Retrieved from: <http://www.hinduism.co.za/sacramen.htm> [Accessed on 29/07/2013]
- III. Chunekar K.C. Bhav prakash Nighantu. 10<sup>th</sup> edition. Varanasi. Chaukhamba Vishwabharati. P-128.
- IV. Das S. What are samskaras? Retrieved from <http://hinduism.about.com/od/basics/a/HinduSamskaras.htm>
- V. Nevatia H. Shodasha Samskara or the Sixteen Sacraments. Retrieved from: <http://suite101.com/article/shodasha-samskara-or-the-sixteen-sacraments-a207720>
- VI. Susruta. Susruta Samhita, vol-2<sup>nd</sup> Srikantha Murthy KR, editor. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Orientalia; 2008. Chikitsasthana.
- VII. Sharma P.V. Susruta Samhita. Vol 2<sup>nd</sup>. Edition 2010. Varanasi. Chaukhamba Bharati Academy Su.Sh.10/49. P-236.
- VIII. Tewari.P.V. Kashyapa samhita. Edition 1996. Varanasi. Chaukhamba Bharati Academy. K.Khil12/10-14. P-597.
- IX. Tewari P.V. Kashyap samhita. Edition 1996. Varanasi. Choukhamba Bharati Academy. K.Khil12/8.
- X. Charaka. Charaka Samhita, Vol-1, Shrama RK, Dash VB, editors. 1<sup>st</sup>ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrita Series Office; 2009. Sutrasthana. P-127.
- XI. Charaka. Chakra Samhita, Vol-2. Shrama RK, Dash VB, editors. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Varanasi Chpukhamba Sanskrita Series Office; 2009. Sutrasthana. P-231.
- XII. Nithin K. even before birth: the purifying world of Hindu Samskaras. Retrived from <http://www.exoticindiaat.com/article/hindu-samskaras/> [Accessed on 29/07/2013]
- XIII. Ghai O.P. Essential Pediatrics. Seventh edition 2010. New Delhi. CBS Publishers and Distributers. P-124.
- XIV. Sharma P.V.Dravya Guna Vigyana. 2nd Vol edition 2003. Varanasi. Chaukhambha Vishwabharti Prakashana. P -616.
- XV. Ghai O.P. Essential Pediatrics. Seventh edition 2010. New Delhi. CBS Publishers and Distributers.